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I applied to the Laidlaw Program because I wanted to gain research experience. I was eager to be apart of a research cohort and form a supportive academic community. I was also drawn to the program by the faculty mentor element, which ensured that the experience I gained was guided and relevant to my future in academia. I was inspired to use my own identity and experience to guide my research on bilingual education in the state of New Mexico and its impacts on identity. The two summer commitment allowed me to conduct comprehensive research on the history, legislation and current state of bilingual education in one summer, using the second to collect and analyze interviews with parents, educators and former students.

Coincidentally, as I was applying for the Laidlaw program, New Mexico was in the thick of an education lawsuit with a verdict still pending. The research I was proposing was relevant and allowed me the opportunity to collect data during a time of organization, activism and legal action. The Laidlaw Program provided me with the opportunity to dedicate myself to researching this suit, how it came to be and how it might change the way in which public education is accessible for bilingual students and how that will have a personal impact on those students. With the generous stipend I knew I had the opportunity to fully immerse myself in research for six weeks with financial stability.

While I had been a research assistant before, I had never conducted my own research. I was nervous and anxious to begin the process as a researcher. I hoped that the Laidlaw Program would provide me with the training, skills and confidence to better my leadership abilities as a researcher. As a Tisch Scholar, I often contemplate how we work towards social change. That work should be informed and leaders should be educated. I saw the Laidlaw Program as an

opportunity to inform myself on the issues of bilingual public education in my own community as the first step to then suggesting and implementing remedies and changes to that system.

Participating in the Laidlaw Program allowed me to reconnect to my community. As a college student studying out of state, it is hard to be an active leader and citizen in my home community. By conducting my Laidlaw project I was able to reconnect with people, organizations and local universities. I acquired knowledge on language justice, language acquisition and pedagogical theories. I became well versed in the nuances of education and I was lucky to hear the voices of nine interview participants who shared their experiences with me. I learned that research can be personal, both to the researcher and the participants. I could feel myself growing, changing and challenging my own understanding of myself and my community.

I gained a deeper understanding of the complexity of identity and institutions, which allowed for personal reflection on how I myself am a byproduct of that relationship. The leadership training provided useful information on resources offered by Tufts and also ways to be a successful researcher. However, since my research was focused on New Mexico, and happening concurrently with lawsuits and legislation, I conducted my research from Albuquerque to be able to analyze the current events as they happened. Because of this, I missed all of the Laidlaw programming which occurred at Tufts University. I was able to use Webex to join in on meetings, but it did not have the same effect as being present. I think the aspect of the programming could be improved by holding some of the more important events at the end of the spring semester to ensure all students are on campus. Even though it was stated that our research did not have to be conducted on Tufts' campus, I felt disconnected from my cohort since I was not able to attend the programming. I also ran into problems ordering needed resources for my

research. I would suggest creating a clear protocol on the ordering process so that future scholars, especially those who are considered low income, are able to access the resources they need in a timely manner so that their research may progress accordingly.

The Laidlaw Program has been crucial in my development as a scholar. I have gained experience working with the IRB, organizing and conducting interviews on my own, as well as confidence in my observations and questions. I have already seen positive effects come out of my Laidlaw experience, for example, I am currently a research intern at the Museum of Fine Arts, a position which I would not have been qualified for without the program. In the future, I see myself building upon my Laidlaw project. I hope to grow my network in New Mexico, as well as within the Laidlaw community.

I have also discovered a new passion in qualitative research that I never knew I had. As a Senior, I am eager to see where this passion might guide me. In the immediate future, I am conducting a thesis project and have applied for a Fulbright grant to teach English based on my findings from the Laidlaw project. While in this moment I cannot say where I might be after graduation, I'm confident that I will continue to do research, and I deeply value leadership based on research. I'm equally as confident that I will continue to participate in the Laidlaw program as an alum to the best of my ability. I have already represented the Program at the Tufts Community Day and have connected with interested students. My greatest ability to remain involved right now is through recruitment to the program. I have made sure to speak to the program as often as possible and have volunteered to help hopeful Laidlaw Scholars learn more about the program and application process. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Laidlaw

Program and I look forward to seeing how this experience will continue to impact me as a scholar, leader and researcher.